



DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

Vol. 2, No. 13

Serving the men and women of Regional Command East, Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan

Feb. 15, 2006

White Devil mortar team trains ANA soldiers

By **Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke**
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan- Dozens of Afghan National Army soldiers from 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps, qualified and received certificates for completing mortar training Jan. 26 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

The soldiers were trained by paratroopers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, on correct maintenance, firing and safety procedures for Russian 82mm mortar systems.

After four days of training, the noncommissioned officers of HHC tested the Afghan soldiers' live fire capability to hit targets approximately 600 meters from their position.

Paratroopers from Task Force White Devil have worked frequently with Afghan National Army troops to help the fledgling army hone their infantry skills.

"I'm glad to teach them because the more they have control of their skills, it will prove that we are successful in our mission of them taking care of their country," said Sgt. Heriberto Precastre, a Houston native and mortar squad leader with HHC.

The paratroopers and soldiers were not sure how the

mortar systems would function during their first live fire, and the first few rounds fired landed far beyond their expected impact area, but with the help of their mentors the soldiers were soon landing the rounds on tar-

get.

"Their equipment isn't standardized, so training with them helps them understand all of the differ-

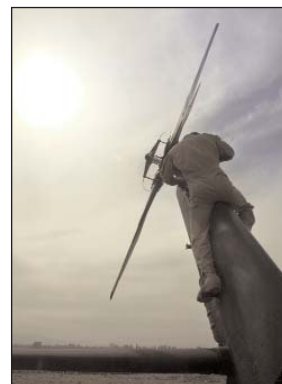
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Afghan National Army soldiers from 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps, fire mortars during a live fire exercise Jan. 26, at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

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Feb. 15, 2006

Devil 6: CTF truly combined in fight

Col. Patrick J. Donahue II
Combined Task Force Devil Commander

Ever since the attacks on our nation of Sept. 11, 2001 and the liberation of Afghanistan from the Taliban regime, our nation's military has waged war against terrorism and led the Afghan people on the path to a better future here. The successful results to date have resulted not from one distinct command, but from units who learned to team up and work side by side.

The components of Task Force Devil, who traveled here separately but joined together on the battlefield, have excelled at every mission set before us

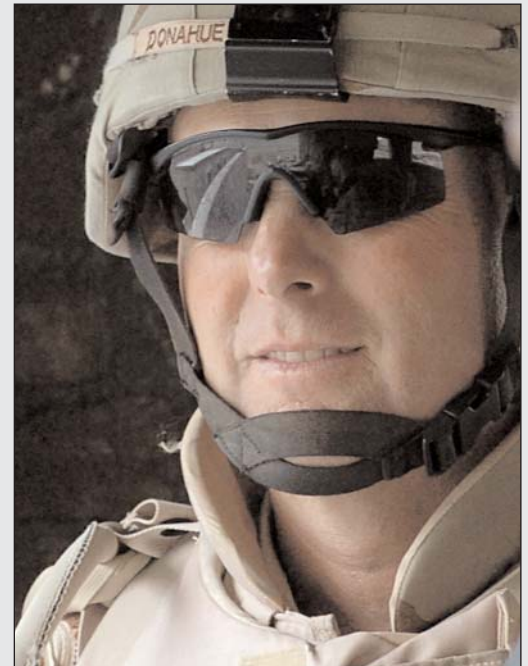
in Operation Enduring Freedom VI. Behind these achievements is one common trait—a spirit of teamwork. It is this spirit we must adhere to as we begin to turn our mission over to Task Force Spartan.

When our most recent deployment here began early last year, we learned from Task Force Thunder to understand our environment and the enemy we would soon face. The knowledge, training and methods we received from Thunder set us up for success on the battlefield. With that in mind, we must prepare ourselves to

do the same for the 10th Mountain Division.

Welcome your replacements and help them get settled in. Train them as diligently as you can, pass on all of the knowledge you have learned, and exchange ideas for how best to further conduct operations. Don't get frustrated if they hear your advice and choose to do something different. Making the 10th Mountain a member of the team during our RIP is absolutely essential to achieving a successful battle handover.

In the past year of operations, the Soldiers, Sailors,



Col. Patrick J. Donahue II

“...pass on all of the knowledge you have learned and exchange ideas for how best to further conduct operations.”

-Col. Patrick J. Donahue II
*Commander
Combined Task Force Devil*

Airmen and Marines of Task Force Devil have disrupted terrorist networks, enhanced security in regions that have known only strife, and established critical infrastructure and services for the people of Afghanistan. Still, there are many more battles to come, and it is our duty to ensure that the men and women of Task Force Spartan are best prepared to carry on our fight.

Remember, we are one team waging one fight. Let's position Spartan for success as we would want to be positioned ourselves.

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The CTF Devil Public

Affairs Office is located in the Tactical Operations Center at FOB Salerno. It can be reached at DSN 318-851-1445 or via e-mail at charles.meseke@us.army.mil.

To view back issues of the *Desert Devil Dispatch*, visit http://www.bragg.army.mil/afvc-a/desert_devil_dispatches.htm

Commander
Col. Patrick J. Donahue II
Command Sergeant Major
CSM Thomas Capel
Public Affairs Officer
Capt. Dan Huvane
Editor
Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke
Assistant Editor
Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Dustoff 36 vigilance saving lives at FOB

By Sgt. Laura E. Griffin
Assistant Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - The crew of Dustoff 36, one of two medevac crews currently at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, starts their shift at 9 a.m. and will stay on alert for the next 24 hours.

It's their turn to be "first up," or the first crew to respond to a call for medical evacuation of a patient. The two crews rotate every 24 hours between being first up and second up for a mission.

This morning starts out slow and somewhat relaxed-in fact, their whole day can go like that-but it can all change into a race against the clock with one call over the radio.

Chief Warrant Officer Wayne R. Steenson, pilot in command for Dustoff 36, equates their schedule to that of a firefighter.

"We don't schedule the calls," Steenson said. "We have to make sure that we stay rested when we're on first up. We're on for 24 hours, which means we could get a call at 1 a.m., so we have to take naps throughout the day. Nothing is worse than flying a goggle mission with zero illu-



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Sgt. Darrell R. Cornick, the crew chief for Dustoff 36, and Cpl. Justin D. Mitchell, the flight medic for Dustoff 36, test the rescue hoist on a UH-60L Blackhawk helicopter Feb. 5.

mination when you've been up all morning."

Not only must the crew stay rested and ready to fly at any time, but they also have to make sure that their helicopter is ready to go at a moment's notice.

The crew performs a "run up" at the beginning of each shift. A run up involves starting up the helicopter, checking its fluids, checking the medical supplies and checking the hoist used to bring up patients from areas where they can't land.

Then they wait.

Steenson is in his room get-

ting ready to write a letter. Sgt. Darrell R. Cornick, the crew chief, is dead asleep. Cpl. Justin D. Mitchell, the flight medic, is just coming out of the bathroom. Chief Warrant Officer Michael P. Forster, the other pilot with Dustoff 36, is surfing the internet and is closest to the radio when the call comes in.

"Medevac! Medevac! Medevac!" comes screeching over the radio just before noon.

Somewhere in the Bermel District in Paktika Province, Afghanistan, a rocket has struck a family walking just outside their compound, destroying their house, killing a 5-year-old girl and seriously wounding three others.

"We were walking and I saw the rocket coming from the tallest mountain near our village," said Shazar Din, the uncle of the three wounded victims, through a translator.

Afghan National Army soldiers and coalition forces came to investigate the explosion and to take the three wounded victims and the uncle to Fire Base Bermel for treatment. A nine-line medevac was called in to take the patients to the hospital at FOB Salerno for more extensive care.

Back at FOB Salerno, Dustoff 36 is getting ready for takeoff.

"We get used to getting changed in a hurry," said Cornick. "I can be geared up and ready to go in about two minutes."

Steenson and Mitchell go to get the latest weather update and the nine-line information. Forster and Cornick grab goggles and weapons and head out to get the helicopter started.

On average, this takes between five and 10 minutes. Approval for flying can take much longer.

"There are three different people that have to give approval for us to fly," said Steenson. "They must justify the utilization of the assets, give weather clearance and evaluate the threat level at the site landing zone."

Approval is given and Dustoff 36 is on its way. The members of Dustoff 36 may each have their individual jobs on the helicopter, but without close teamwork, none of them would be able to perform their jobs.

"We're a crew of four and we back each other up," said Steenson. "The pilots must make sure that we don't cross over into Pakistan on our way to sites near the boarder. The crew chief monitors fuel and keeps an eye out for enemies and obstructions on the right side of the helicopter while the medic looks out the left side. No one makes a mistake until all four of us make a mistake."

While en route to the site, they are escorted by an AH-64 Apache helicopter, which pushes ahead as they draw near the LZ to make sure the area is clear.

The medevac call was for a 3-year-old girl with shoulder wounds and for a 21-year-old woman with leg wounds.

"Nine-lines are rarely accurate," said Mitchell. "We always come prepared for more than we are expecting."

When the crew lands, a humvee drives up with the 21-



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Chief Warrant Officer Wayne R. Steenson, the pilot in command for the crew of Dustoff 36, fills out his risk assessment paperwork for his crew's 24-hour shift.

See "Dustoff" page 10

Over 900 troops participate in Task Force run

By Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan- Over 900 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians of Combined Task Force Devil participated in a formation run and pass in review Jan. 27, at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

The runners completed a 4 mile loop of the base which has served as the home of CTF Devil since May of last year.

It was the first time so many Devil troops were gathered in one place and Col. Patrick J. Donahue II, and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel took the opportunity to address the task force before the start of the run.

"I want to thank everyone out here for doing a hell of a job in Afghanistan this last year," Donahue said.

The majority of CTF Devil is wrapping up nearly of year of operations in the eastern portion of Afghanistan along the Pakistan border.

"How many of you people out there are leaving in the next six weeks?" asked Donahue with his hand raised high. He was answered with cheers of enthusiasm from the crowd.

Donahue reminded the troops that they were truly a joint task force citing that active and reserve components of all branches of service made an impact in Afghanistan.

"We were one team over here, I am very proud to have served with all of you," Donahue said.

Capel, the task force command ser-



Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke

Combined Task Force Devil troops keep up the pace during a formation run Jan. 27, at Forward Operating Base Salerno. More than 900 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians turned out for the run around the base.

geant major, also lauded the troops for their efforts while in Afghanistan, evident by the positive impression left upon the many distinguished guests and officials to visit the task force.

"Every visitor we've had went back with nothing but good and positive things to say about this task force," said Capel.

"It is not because of me and the brigade commander up here, it is because of the hard working troops to our front," he said pointing to the formation.

Capel also reminded leaders to contin-

ue to take care of their Soldiers throughout the redeployment process and at their home stations.

Donahue then called the formation to attention and led the task force on the run.

With hundreds of feet pounding the earth and cadence sang loudly the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines of TF Devil were treated to a sunrise view of the Afghan country-side that they have spent their deployment working to secure from ever again becoming a terrorist safe-haven.



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Combined Task Force Devil circles a guard tower during a formation run Jan. 27, at Forward Operating Base Salerno. More than 900 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians turned out for the run around the base.

Air Force firefighters transfer authority

By **Sgt. Laura E. Griffin** and **Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige**

Combined Task Force Devil PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - "Exercise, exercise, exercise!" blared over the hand-held radio of one Kellogg, Brown and Root employee standing near a smoking building, announcing the start of the final test required before the KBR Fire Department could take over operations at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, Jan. 30.

"KBR is taking over the major firefighting operations here from the Air Force

Fire Department," said Maj. Doug Devries, Garrison Commander with the 111th Area Support Group. "The AFFD is an expeditionary unit whose main purpose is to provide support on the runways. They've been going above and beyond by providing coverage for the whole FOB, but that is not what they're set up to do."

The test required KBR firefighters to respond to a reported building fire with people trapped inside. The fire was simulated by filling an abandoned building with smoke from a smoke machine and hiding a mannequin inside.

"Their response time was about two

minutes," said Devries. "They were extremely professional. This test validated the system and proves that it works, which is very reassuring for increasing safety on the FOB."

To make sure the firefighters stay current in their training, this exercise will be repeated every quarter.

Some of the duties the KBR firefighters will perform include checking on smoke detectors and fire extin-



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

A Kellogg Brown and Root firefighter rushes through the front door of a smoke-filled building during a drill Jan. 31 at FOB Salerno, Afghanistan.

guishers in the buildings on the FOB. They will also train unit fire marshals to help insure fire safety education among the soldiers and they will have input in new building designs to ensure fire safety codes are being followed.

The official transfer of authority from the AFFD to the KBR FD took place Jan. 31.

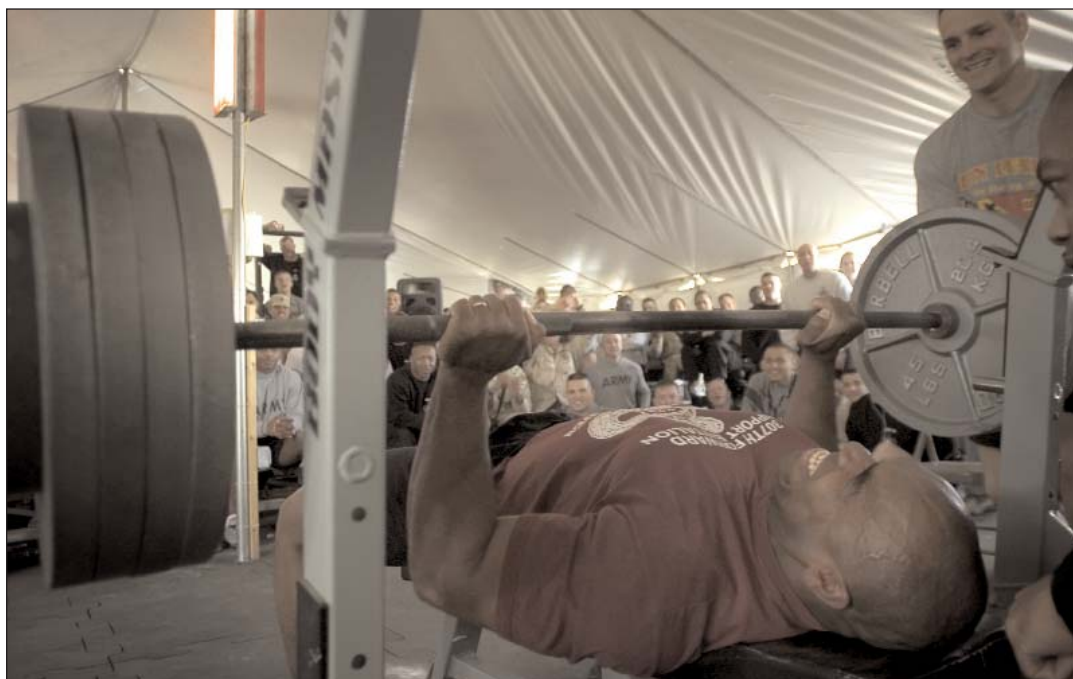


Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Two Kellogg, Brown and Root fire fighters work to ventilate a building from smoke during a drill Jan. 31 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan.

The strongest of the strong...

1st Lt. Carpaccia E. Owens, preventative medicine officer with Company C, Logistics Task Force 307, Combined Task Force Devil participates in a bench press competition Jan. 27 at Forward Operating Base Salerno. Owens won the competition in his weight class and had the top lift of the day.



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Devil Re-up gets boost from bonus

By Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan—"There is no better time than now to be a Soldier eligible for reenlistment," said Master Sgt. Joseph H. Wolfe III, senior career counselor for Regional Command East in Afghanistan.

"We have the ability to get more of what (reenlisting Soldiers) want at this time," Wolfe said.

With record tax-free bonuses, choice duty assignments and other benefits offered by the Army, Wolfe is probably right.

Recently the maximum tax-free bonus has increased to an all time high of \$22,500, with even higher bonuses available for certain military occupational specialties. Most of the Soldiers receiving the bonus are pay grades E-4 through E-6, and are paid in a lump sum.

About half of those who reenlist have received the maximum amount, while another third comes "very close," according to Wolfe.

The large cash bonus has helped Combined Task Force Devil reach 115% of last year's goal for retention, and double the number of reenlistments



Sgt. 1st Class Wrilsher Mendoza

A Combined Task Force Devil Soldier reenlists with a bang at Forward Operating Base Salerno's demolitions range in this undated file photograph.

projected so far this year.

Even with the large cash bonus, Wolfe says that there is one benefit that always draws troops into his office.

"Believe it or not, people still want to serve their country," Wolfe said. "Right now we are reenlisting a lot of people who came in after 9/11 specifically

to serve their country in the war on terror."

Sgt. 1st Class Frank V. Pupo, career counselor for 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, also credits the paratroopers for his unit's ability to consistently meet retention goals.

"A paratrooper on average is a higher caliber of Soldier," Pupo said.

He says that higher standard lets him know that when a paratrooper walks into his office, the troop wants to reenlist, and it is his job to help get the Soldier what he wants out of a career in the Army.

What keeps troops coming into the retention office at Forward Operating Base Salerno looking to reenlist? Wolfe says the high number of troops that seek out career counselors are a direct reflection of the support he receives from the CTF Devil chain of command.

"When we were getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan, many Soldiers had reenlisted for certain duty assignments, re-classing to new jobs and going to schools. These Soldiers could

have been forced to deploy with the unit to Afghanistan and miss out on those things, but Devil 6 made the decision to let those Soldiers get what they wanted out of their reenlistment," Wolfe said.

The positive command climate reassures Soldiers about renewing their commitment to the Army as they step into his office, Wolfe said.

"I have not met one person who has reenlisted out here that hasn't been completely satisfied," Wolfe said.

Pupo and Wolfe say that reaction from Soldiers is what makes their job worthwhile.

"We are helping Soldiers," Pupo said.

As the deployment of Combined Task Force Devil nears and end, Pupo and Wolfe encourage all Soldiers in the task force who are thinking about reenlistment to stop in and see what options are available to them. Even Soldiers who are not within a year of their discharge are eligible to receive a hefty tax-free bonus and other benefits while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Sgt. 1st Class Wrilsher Mendoza

Occasionally the retention office of Combined Task Force Devil was so busy that mass reenlistments were needed to accommodate the needs of Soldiers eager to continue serving in the Army. The Soldiers pictured are paratroopers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Gen. Honore visits Khost province

By **Spc. Laura E. Griffin**
Assistant Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Afghan National Army soldiers in Khost, Afghanistan, and U.S. Army Soldiers stationed at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, received a visit from Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, Commanding General, 1st U.S. Army, Jan. 24.

Honore first visited ANA soldiers at their base on Khwaja Matun Hill, where he was given a full brief on ANA operations from Brig. Gen. Mohammed Akram Sameh, Commanding General of 1st Brigade, 203rd ANA Corps.

"We are working very closely with the 82nd Airborne Soldiers and the embedded training team to control our areas of operations in the face of great adversity," said Sameh through an interpreter. "Our success is possible because of the education and artillery training our troops are receiving from the U.S. forces."



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Afghan Brig. Gen Sameh points to a map of Afghanistan Jan. 23 while briefing Army Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore during a visit to Khost.

When Sameh finished his brief, Honore expressed his great satisfaction with the accomplishments of the brigade and its commander.

"You are getting to command this brigade at a very

historic time in Afghanistan," said Honore. "The success of any unit of troops is directly related to the commander. This brigade has done very well."

Honore later received a complete tour of the ANA base and was introduced to the rest of the officer staff before conveying back to FOB Salerno.

He had lunch there with National Guard and Reserve soldiers activated for nine to 10 months of their yearlong duty in Afghanistan to hear what they had to say about mobilization training.

Honore explained that improving the readiness of the reserve and National Guard components Soldiers east of the Mississippi is his major responsibility, to include the mobilization and readiness training given to deploying units.

"Having Lt. Gen. Honore visit FOB Salerno and the 1st Brigade, 203rd Embedded Training Team was a great event," said Lt. Col. Ted W.

Mauzey, an ETT team chief.

"It afforded the ETTs the opportunity to hear first hand from Honore how post-mobilization training was being improved," Mauzey said.

"It was good to see that many of those recommendations, such as using ETTs with recent Afghanistan experience as instructors, were implemented," Mauzey added.

Other issues addressed at the lunch included distribution of the new Advanced Combat Uniforms to reserve and National Guard units, more combat lifesaver training, and "total immersion training" for soldiers preparing to deploy.

Honore also expressed interest in using the experience of soldiers leaving theater to better prepare soldiers training to deploy through the Warrior Training Program, to become trainers and to share their fresh experience with soldiers mobilizing.



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, Commanding General of 1st United States Army, speaks with Brig. Gen. Mohammed Akram Sameh, Commanding General of 1st Brigade, 203rd ANA Corps through an interpreter Jan. 23 at the Afghan National Army base at Khwaja Matun Hill in Khost, Afghanistan.

ANA, CTF Devil team up for MEDCAP

By Capt. Dan Huvane

Combined Task Force Devil Public Affairs
Officer

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Afghan National Army soldiers conducted their first Medical Civilian Assistance Program with the help of the 1st Brigade, 203rd ANA Corps Embedded Training Team, Jan. 26 outside Khost.

The ANA brigade had participated in about 15 MEDCAPs since June in the province, according to Master Sgt. Lafitte J. Holmes, ETT medic and medical mentor of the brigade. What made this particular clinic significant was that it was the first one that Afghans have primarily planned and conducted.

"They've gone from observing to assisting to providing unmonitored care," said Holmes. "They could probably run this on their own, but we're still supporting logistically. As individual practitioners, they're on top of it."

Supporting the 1st Brigade ETT were the soldiers of C Company, 307th Logistics Task Force. The LTF provided medics to assist the Afghan medical staff, humanitarian aid, and logistical and security support.

Capt. Kevin J. Mahoney, company commander, explained that when the 307th first arrived, they were planning missions in which U.S. medics would provide all of the care.

But that only increased the Afghans' reliance on coalition forces.

"We're getting them trained to treat their own patients and see their own people."

-1st Lt. David L. Armeson
Company C, Logistics Task Force 307
Executive Officer



Capt. Dan Huvane

Local women receive care from Capt. Anne E. Fuller, Company C, Logistics Task Force 307 at the Medical Civilian Assistance Program held in Khost, Jan. 26.

"This puts the focus on the host nation support system, and allows them to put trust in the ANA medical system and the ANA as a whole," said Mahoney.

Challenges faced by the ETT in training the ANA include the language barrier, differences in time-

liness, and a lack of adequate resources, said Holmes. But he added that the pride and patriotism of the Afghans give them the drive to

accomplish things on their own.

One of the most significant signs of the

brigade's progression has been their comprehension that they need to foster their own civil affairs programs, said ETT executive officer Lt.Col. Peter W. Malik. The need for clothes underscores how much help the local civilian population needs.

"The ANA understands that to be successful as an army, it takes more than a tactical operations picture," said Malik. "They now understand the strategic value of med-caps and humanitarian assistance."

The 307th works hand in hand with the ETT to plan and coordinate missions like this, according to 1st Lt. David L. Armeson, company executive officer.

"It's good that we're here, and letting the ANA medics perform the treatment," said Armeson. "We're getting them trained to treat their own patients, and see their own people."

Devil Voices: What is your advice for the next rotation?



Staff Sgt. Glenn G. Gonzalez

"Bring a thumbdrive with you because the ones at the bazaar are very expensive."



Sgt. Lynn M. Madrigal

"Take it one day at a time and you'll be home before you know it."



Spc. Kurt M. Willer

"Don't worry your families over every little thing that happens over here. It's not as bad as it seems."



Sgt. Thomas R. Moore

"Bring tea bags to make sun tea in the summer when temperatures reach 120° F."

White Devil NCOs mentor ANA troops

By **Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke**
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan- Afghan National Army Soldiers completed a leadership development course for non-commissioned officers taught by NCOs from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Feb. 9 at Khost.

Thirty-three ANA soldiers completed the seven-day course, which taught various leadership skills such as land navigation, tactical formation movement, hand signals and how to issue warning, fragmented and operations orders.

The course was designed to prepare

the NCOs for their upcoming leadership classes at regional training facilities. The course was created by Afghan Command Sgt. Maj. Sherali, 1st Kandak command sergeant major, and Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Bartleson, a Fayetteville N.C. native and platoon sergeant with Co. A.

It wasn't Bartleson's first experience with training Afghan Army Soldiers. He also served with the 10th Mountain Division during 2003.

"The land navigation is the most important skill they learned during the course,"

Bartleson said. "But most important overall was the knowledge of how our Army works with the NCOs."

Bartleson said that Afghan NCOs were accustomed to working under strict supervision of officers. With the help of a squad of paratroopers from his platoon, Bartleson demonstrated how important it is that NCOs are capable of filling a leadership role if a commanding officer was hurt or killed in battle.

"In our Army, everyone knows everyone else's jobs," said Bartleson. "That way if I go down, I know one of my squad leaders can step up into my position."

The squad received positive feedback from Afghan Soldiers on the training.

"I have attended the leadership course in the Kabul Military Training Compound and this training here was better than the training there," Sherali said.

"I have learned much and will try and lead other classes of Soldiers now,"

Devil Doc: Take care during redeployment

By **Maj. Corey Costello**
Combined Task Force Devil Surgeon

When you return home, an unwelcome part of Afghanistan sometimes returns home with you. You performed your duties in a country where several diseases can make you feel ill. For example, malaria, leishmaniasis, and tuberculosis can take months before symptoms occur.

If you feel ill or find a rash on yourself, consult your physician or medic. When you go to your aid station or clinic, tell the medic where and when you served overseas. When your replacement arrives in Afghanistan, emphasize to them the medical threats and how some of the members of CTF-Devil acquired these diseases.

Additionally, remind them of the measures to protect troops from malaria and leishmaniasis. Your malaria pill, permethrin-treated uniforms, and bed nets effectively protect you from malaria and leishmaniasis. These diseases, though uncommon, do occur in our troops. When discovered early, prompt treatment will ensure a quick recovery and return to duty.

Sherali said.

Eight NCOs of the original 33 were given additional training in order to have the ability to instruct future Soldiers attending the course.

Bartleson hoped that the training concepts he taught to the instructors would help the Afghan Army build a stronger NCO corps of dedicated, highly professional and knowledgeable leaders.



Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige

NCOs from the 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps, Afghan National Army show off certificates awarded to them after completion of leadership training conducted by paratroopers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Feb. 9 at Khost.

We want to hear from you

Are you an aspiring writer or photographer? We want to use your stories and photos in the Desert Devil Dispatch to highlight the great things the men and women of Regional Command-East are doing. For more information, e-mail Sgt. Chuck Meseke at charles.meseke@us.army.mil.

Dustoff

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year-old female, then another humvee drives up with a 3-year-old boy with a shoulder wound. Then a third humvee drives up with a 9-year-old boy with shrapnel wounds to his head, torso and forearm and their uncle, Din, as an escort.

The helicopter is packed tight with barely any room to move. They were on the ground about 10 minutes.

"The patients' wounds had already been dressed and they all had IVs," said Mitchell. "I checked the older patients' blood oxygen levels, but I couldn't get a reading on the 3-year-old because his fingers were too small. As a precautionary measure I held an oxygen mask just over his face, so as he breathed normally he would get a little extra oxy-

gen."

Mitchell also checks their IVs and reassures Din.

"The escort was very concerned and kept asking me about the youngest boy,"

said Mitchell. "I don't speak Pashto, but I did what I could to reassure him that the boy was going to be OK, and that we would be at the hospital soon."

When the crew lands at FOB Salerno, a litter team is waiting to retrieve the patients.

"I was most concerned about the youngest, so we unloaded him first," said Mitchell. "Then we unloaded the 9-year-old, followed by the 21-year-old and the escort."

Once the helicopter is empty, Mitchell follows the patients into the hospital to brief the doctors on their status. Steenson, Forster and Cornick leave to refuel the helicopter and do their post-flight checks, making sure that nothing has broken. Mitchell comes out and restocks the supplies and equipment for the next call.

Then they go back to their tent and wait.



Sgt. Laura E. Griffin

Sgt. Darrell R. Cornick, the crew chief for Dustoff 36, cleans waterspots from the ALQ-144 electronic counter measure on top of a UH-60L Blackhawk helicopter Feb. 5.

Below: Staff Sgt. Jason S. Wright, section sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force White Devil, checks the sights of an 82mm mortar before beginning a live fire certification exercise Jan. 26, at Forward Operating Base Salerno. Bottom Right: ANA soldiers receive certificates for their training

Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke



Mortars

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ent systems," Precastre said.

A short break in the live fire took place as commanders from both TF White Devil and 1st Kandak presented the soldiers with certificates for successfully completing the training.

Once they received their certificates the soldiers went back to firing, honing their skills to defeat the enemies of Afghanistan.

"Our soldiers are happy to shoot mortars and train so that we may challenge the enemies of Afghanistan," said Lt. Col. Abdul Hamed, the intelligence officer for 1st Kandak, through an interpreter.

As ANA soldiers play a more prominent role in operations, it seems as if all eyes are on the soldiers and their ability to defend their own country.

"This training will give them a great advantage, they won't need indirect fire support from us, they can do it themselves," Precastre said.

